

# TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL



On April 1, 1998 Telford and Wrekin Borough Councils were awarded Unitary Authority status and by merging the two separate units together the organisation grew to nearly 6,000 staff overnight. Telford & Wrekin Council (TWC) is known for its innovation in providing services and for its leading role in setting up partnerships with key suppliers. Establishing methods of internal and external communication would therefore be vital to enable the business to keep running efficiently and effectively.

TWC considered the decision to implement an enterprise wide corporate IT help desk a logical one, but appreciated that it would take time to get it running efficiently. Fortunately, the council did not have to start right at the beginning of what could have been a very long process.

The need for a help desk was first realised in early 1997. Keen to ensure that it was correctly advised on the best, and most appropriate help desk packages available TWC worked alongside a team of independent IT consultants. A short list of five products were selected and these organisations were put through a carefully produced questionnaire relating to TWC's exact requirements. The vendors gave responses using a 'check sheet' format, with answers being simply 'compliant', partially compliant' or 'non-compliant'. It was Quetzal, the advanced help desk solution, from Datawatch International Limited that got TWC's final vote.



Initially, Quetzal was used purely as a central database to log calls, fulfilling a short-term objective and creating the first step towards increasing the level of customer service that the authority provides. But, with an increase in staff and queries, by April 1998 it was time to extend the use of the help desk and start using Quetzal to its full potential. "Problems and queries were logged on paper initially," explains Mark Jones, IT help desk Co-Ordinator at TWC. "These were difficult to keep track of and unfortunately, in some cases, problems weren't being resolved quickly enough - even after continuous chasing by the person who reported the problem initially. We are also aware that the number of 'hallway requests' for repairs or problems to be solved was increasing. As these were not being logged on a central system, there was no quality control procedure in place. We had no idea how efficiently the organisation was, or wasn't being run and that had to change."



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## Flexibility and the ability to grow



Although Quetzal had originally been selected for its flexibility and capability to grow, there was some level of scepticism towards implementing Quetzal as the standard solution across the entire organisation, because of its apparent complexity.

This concern was quickly resolved once the users were working with the system. Following even the most basic level of training, it became apparent just how user-friendly the system actually is. Since the merger of the two authorities, call volume has increased from around 40 calls a week to around 700 a week - aided by internal communications. Awareness has grown and an increased number of council services have realised the business benefits that the help desk offers. Jones cites one case in particular. "The finance department was getting increasingly busy with calls and queries, particularly towards the end of the month when wages were being paid. A request was made one Friday afternoon, that the help desk staff take over the initial calls. Forwarding the query to the department to solve and then return to the caller with the necessary information. By Monday lunchtime the system was up and running perfectly. It was that easy."

TWC appreciates that it is in its best interests for all departments and customers, such as schools, libraries and social services to know what the system can do, and most importantly, how to use it. TWC educates its customers

through regular open days which give attendees the opportunity to see how the system works, from where a call is received, to how the query is logged and what processes are undertaken before a return phone call is made. "It helps for them to know how the query is being dealt with" Jones explains, "People are naturally sceptical that something is actually being done when they log a query. By openly showing them the processes in place and how they are adhered to gives them increased confidence in our system. Subsequently they don't feel the need to chase each call that they make. They know someone will get back to them."

The faith in the system, and the need for continuous improvement, has led the TWC team to set their own service level agreements. Each recorded call has a one hour response time with a four hour fix deadline to meet, and a random 5% customer call back is quality. Criteria such as call answering speed, attitude of help desk staff and the speed of response to solve the problem are taken into consideration. TWC also asks for additional suggestions to enable any further improvements to be made. These checks are made daily and are marked on a points basis, ranging from 1 (excellent) to 5 (poor). Almost all respondents marked the overall procedure with grades 1 and 2. This quality control procedure has created a customer interface that TWC is keen to maintain.



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## An evolving solution

There are currently two full time and two part time staff operating the help desk, that's run on a platform which pass calls through to specialist support groups throughout the organisation. As the various departments see the benefits and are moved towards a central query point, TWC is looking to increase the Quetzal user licences from 24 to 30 to ensure the system operates at optimum efficiency.

When Jones was asked to comment on how the organisation felt following the decision to invest in Quetzal, he chose his words carefully. "We feel we are victims," he replied. "Victims of our own success. The team is delighted with what Quetzal has offered up until now, and it is still capable of growing even further with the business. Initial thoughts of how difficult it would be to establish a corporate help desk are fading. It appears that the objective we set ourselves to achieve is evolving naturally."



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